

Through the Bible in 24 Months



WEEK 100 OF 104

The Lamb Overcomes

Week 100 of 104 · 96% of the way through the Bible

THIS WEEK'S READINGS

General Old Testament	Obadiah, Jonah
Wisdom Literature	Ecclesiastes 7-8
Gospels	John 16:5-33
General New Testament	Revelation 12-13

THIS WEEK AT A GLANCE

Pride, mercy, and a dragon. Obadiah needs only twenty-one verses to tell Edom that a nest built among the stars is still within reach of God's hand. Jonah runs the opposite direction from the worst city he knows, and when it repents he sits down under a plant and tells God he would rather die than watch Nineveh forgiven. Solomon stands in the house of mourning and admits that a sentence God delays gets mistaken for a sentence God will never carry out. Jesus warns eleven men that they will be scattered, and then says, be of good cheer, I have overcome the world. And John shows us how that victory looks from heaven: a dragon, two beasts, and a Lamb whose blood is already winning.

How to use this guide: Read all four passages during the week. Your teacher will take up two of them in class, one in each session. For the other two, work through the "Extended Class Discussion or Self-Study" questions on your own and write your answers in the space provided.

GENERAL OLD TESTAMENT Obadiah, Jonah

Pride Brought Low, Mercy Poured Out

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

Two short books about nations, and they pull in opposite directions. Obadiah addresses Edom, Esau's descendants, who stood at the crossroads and watched Jerusalem burn, then helped themselves to what was left. Jonah addresses a prophet who is sent to the capital of the most feared empire of his day and runs for a ship going the other way. There is a storm, a fish, a city that repents from the king down to the cattle, and a prophet outside the walls, furious that God did what God is like.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Obadiah says the pride of Edom's heart deceived them, because they lived in the clefts of the rock and felt untouchable. Why is pride so difficult to see in ourselves, and what still makes people feel out of reach today?

2. Jonah 4 is the real point of the book, and Jonah's complaint in 4:2 is that he knew all along God would be merciful. Who is the Nineveh you would rather God not forgive, and what does your honest answer expose in you?
3. Jesus points back to Jonah in Matthew 12:39–41 and says the men of Nineveh will stand up in the judgment with His generation. How does the Lord's use of this account settle the questions people raise about it?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. Read Obadiah 10–14 and list what Edom actually did on the day Jerusalem fell. Count how many of the charges are about standing by and watching rather than striking a blow.
2. Trace the direction Jonah travels in 1:3–5 and 2:6: down to Joppa, down into the ship, down into the lowest parts. What is the writer showing you about running from God?
3. Compare Jonah 4:2 with Exodus 34:6 and Joel 2:13. Jonah is quoting Scripture back to God as a complaint. Write down what that tells you about him and about the God he knew.
4. Read Jonah 3:5–9 and list everyone in Nineveh who responded, from the greatest to the least. Compare their response with the way Israel answered her own prophets in Hosea 6:4 and Amos 4:6–11.
5. Name the person or the group you have quietly written off as beyond God's reach. Pray for them by name every day this week, and take one concrete step that would help them hear the gospel.

WISDOM LITERATURE Ecclesiastes 7–8

Wisdom at the Graveside

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

The Preacher turns to proverbs, and they are not the cheerful kind. A good name beats expensive perfume; the day of death beats the day of birth; a funeral teaches more than a feast; a wise man's rebuke beats a fool's song. Then he pushes into harder country: righteous men who perish in their righteousness, wicked men who live long, a warning against being overly righteous, the flat statement that no one on earth does good and never sins, and the observation that delayed judgment makes people bold.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Ecclesiastes 7:2–4 says it is better to go to the house of mourning than to the house of feasting. Why would a funeral teach you more than a party, and when did a loss last actually change the way you live?
2. Ecclesiastes 7:16 warns against being overly righteous and overly wise. Read it with 7:15–18 and 7:20, and work out what the Preacher is and is not saying, since no one imagines God wants less obedience.
3. Ecclesiastes 8:11 says that because the sentence against evil is not carried out speedily, people set their hearts to do evil. Where do you see delayed consequences quietly teaching people, including you, to take God less seriously?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. List the “better than” statements in 7:1–12. Which one is hardest for you to believe, and what would have to change in you for it to ring true?
2. Read Ecclesiastes 7:20 with Romans 3:23 and 1 John 1:8–10. What do these passages affirm about every accountable person, and what do they carefully not say about infants?
3. Trace what the Preacher says about the fear of God in 8:12–13, and notice the phrase he uses in the middle of contrary evidence. Where does he land, and on what basis?
4. Compare Ecclesiastes 8:8 with Hebrews 9:27 and Luke 12:16–21. Write down what all three agree on regarding the limits of human control.
5. Ecclesiastes 7:5 says the rebuke of the wise is better than the song of fools. Name the person whose correction you have been avoiding, go to them this week, and ask them plainly to tell you the truth.

GOSPELS John 16:5–33

Sorrow Turned into Joy

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

Jesus tells eleven grieving men something that sounds impossible: it is to your advantage that I go away. He describes the Helper’s work, convicting the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment, and guiding these men into all truth. Then He speaks of a little while, a woman in labor whose anguish turns to joy the moment the

child is born, and a day when they will ask the Father directly. The chapter ends with a warning that they will scatter, and with a sentence to carry into any hard year.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Jesus says it is to their advantage that He goes away (16:7). Why would these men be better off with Jesus gone and the Helper come, and what does that tell you about what the Spirit came to accomplish?
2. In 16:8–11 the Spirit convicts the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment. Read Acts 2:36–37 and trace how that conviction actually reached the hearts of the crowd on the day of Pentecost.
3. The chapter ends, “In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world” (16:33). How do those two halves hold together, and what does that sentence ask of someone in this room having a hard year?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. List the works of the Helper named in 16:7–15, and write beside each one whether it is aimed at the world or at the apostles in that room.
2. Read 16:12–13 slowly. Whom is Jesus addressing, what is promised to them, and how do Ephesians 3:3–5, 2 Peter 1:3, and Jude 3 describe the result of that promise?
3. Trace the picture of the woman in labor in 16:20–22. In the apostles’ own experience, what turned out to be the pain, and what turned out to be the joy?
4. Compare the promise about asking in 16:23–27 with James 4:3 and 1 John 5:14–15. What conditions do the apostles attach to prayer that we often leave off?
5. Jesus told these men they would be scattered and then offered them peace (16:32–33). Name the trouble you expect in the next month, and write out the sentence from this chapter you intend to preach to yourself when it arrives.

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

The curtain pulls back on the conflict behind all the others. A woman clothed with the sun is in labor, and a red dragon waits to devour her child the moment He is born. The child is caught up to God's throne, the dragon is thrown down, and he turns on her other children. Then two beasts rise, one from the sea carrying the dragon's authority and one from the earth that looks like a lamb and speaks like a dragon, marking everyone who wants to buy bread.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Revelation 12 shows a woman, a child, and a dragon crouched in front of her. Work out from the chapter itself who each figure is, then discuss what this account adds to the Christmas story we usually tell.
2. Revelation 12:11 says they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death. What kind of overcoming is that, and how is it different from the way we normally picture winning?
3. Two beasts appear in chapter 13, and the second one exists to make people worship the first. Given who first read this book and what they were facing, what would these beasts have meant to them, and why should we refuse to attach them to names in today's news?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. List everything Revelation 12:9 calls the dragon. Read Genesis 3:15 and Romans 16:20 alongside it, and write down what has already happened to him.
 2. Compare the beast of 13:1–2 with the four beasts of Daniel 7:2–7. Note what John has combined into one animal, and say what he is telling his readers about the empire they lived under.
 3. Trace the imitations running through these two chapters: a dragon, a beast, and a second beast set against the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, and a mark set against the seal of 7:3. What does that pattern show about how evil works?
 4. Given that seven is the number of completeness in this book, work out why a number like 666 would strike the first readers as a portrait of failure rather than a code to crack.
 5. Revelation 13:10 ends, "Here is the patience and the faith of the saints." Name the place where your faith right now needs patience rather than a solution, and decide specifically how you will endure there this month.
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NEXT WEEK'S READING: Micah 1-7; Nahum 1-3 · Ecclesiastes 9-12 · John 17:1-18:24 · Revelation 14-16

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